1507/621

THE

WEDDING DAY,

A

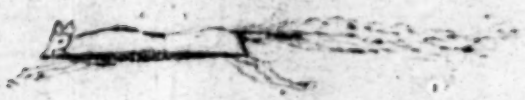
COMEDY:

IN TWO ACTS;

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE.

BY MRS. INCHBALD.



DUBLIN:

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1795.

15
62
JUL

PROLOGUE,

BY T. VAUGHAN, ESQ.

Spoken by Mr. BARRYMORE.

THE title given to our play
Is whimſical and odd. you'll ſay,
Becauſe announced—the Wedding Day.
But know you not, my friends above,
(*To the Galleries.*
'Tis what you one and all approve?
For when you ſqueeze each other's hand,
And find your wiſhes at a ſtand,
You preſs the Wedding Day, and cry,
Come, let's to church, my dear, and try
Who loves the trueſt—you or I.
Then as 'tis known a day of bliſs,
Pray let it not prove *here* amiſs;
For tho' elop'd—I know not how—
From *Next door Neighbours*—juſt below—
And hither come to make her bow—
Like other trips of gallant love,
Conſtant *to both* you'll find her prove,
Or who is right, or who is wrong,
With me to ſtate does not belong;
But only to proclaim the banns,
And leave to you th' applauding hands;
Nor hope to find one critic here
Will dare forbid our Wedding Cheer;
But give their uſual friendly boon,
And let's enjoy *the honey-moon*.
To laugh is all our author means
In what ſhe pourtrays in her ſcenes,
And aims, in all ſhe dares to write,
To make her Wedding Day—a merry night.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Lord Rakeland	—	Mr. BARRYMORE.
Sir Adam Conteſt		Mr. KING.
Mr. Millden	—	Mr. PACKER.
Mr. Conteſt	—	Mr. C. KEMBLE.

WOMEN.

Lady Autumn,	—	Miſs TIDSWELL.
Lady Conteſt	—	Mrs. JORDAN.
Mrs. Hamford	—	Mrs. HOPKINS.
Hannah —	—	Miſs HEARD.

Several Servants.

SCENE, London, TIME, One Day.

THE WEDDING DAY:

A

COMEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Apartment at Lord RAKELAND'S.

Enter a SERVANT, *followed by Lord* RAKELAND.

Lord RAKELAND.

AT home? to be ſure I am—how could you make any doubts about it? [*Exit* Servant.] Deny me to my old acquaintance, and favourite friend, Tom Conteſt!

Enter Mr. CONTEST.

My dear Conteſt, I congratulate us both that your travels are completed, and that you are come to taſte, for the remainder of your life, the joys of your own country.

Mr. CONTEST.

Whether to taſte joy or ſorrow I am yet in doubt; for I am uncertain in what manner I ſhall be received by my father.

Lord RAKELAND.

Have not you ſeen him yet?

Mr. CONTEST.

No:—nor dare I till I know in what humour he is.

Lord RAKELAND.

In a good one you may depend upon it; for he is very lately married.

Mr. CONTEST.

To my utter concern! I heard ſome time ago, indeed, that it was his deſign to marry again; but as he has never condeſcended to make me acquainted with it himſelf, I know nothing farther reſpecting the marriage than what public report has thrown in my way. Pray can you tell me who my new mother is?

Lord RAKELAND.

I am told ſhe is very young, extremely lively, and prodigiouſly beautiful. I am told, too, that ſhe has been confined in the country, dreſſed and treated like a child, till her preſent age of eighteen, in order to preſerve the appearance of youth in her mother.

Mr CONTEST.

But who is her mother? Of what family is ſhe?

Lord RAKELAND.

That I don't know—and I ſuppoſe your father did not conſider of what family ſhe was, but merely what family ſhe was likely to bring him.

Mr CONTEST.

Yes, I have no doubt but he married on purpoſe

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poſe to diſinherit me, for having written to him, "that I had fixed my affections upon a widow of ſmall fortune, but one who was ſo perfectly to my wiſhes, that even his commands could not force me to forſake her."

Lord RAKELAND.

And were you in earneſt?

Mr. CONTEST.

I thought I was then; but at preſent I am more humble. I have implored his pardon for thoſe haſty expreſſions, and now only preſume by ſupplication to obtain his approbation of my choice.

Lord RAKELAND.

Is ſhe a foreigner!

Mr. CONTEST.

No; an Engliſh woman.—We met at Florence—parted at Venice—and ſhe arrived in London juſt four days before me.

Lord RAKELAND.

And when will you introduce me to her?

Mr. CONTEST.

Are you as much a man of gallantry as ever? If you are, you ſhall firſt promiſe me not to make love to her.

Lord RAKELAND.

As to that, my dear friend, you know I never make a promiſe when I think there is the leaſt probability of my breaking it.

Mr. CONTEST.

Then poſitively you ſhall not ſee my choice till

till I am ſecure of her. But I can tell you what I'll do—I'll introduce you to my young mother in law, if you like.

Lord RAKELAND.

My dear friend, that will do quite as well—nay, I don't know if it won't do better. Come, let's go directly.

Mr. CONTEST.

Hold! not till I have obtained my father's leave:—for, after offending him ſo highly as not to hear from him theſe ſix months, I thought it neceſſary to ſend a letter to him as ſoon as I arrived this morning, to beg his permiſſion to wait upon him. And here, I ſuppoſe, is his anſwer.

Enter a SERVANT, *and gives a letter to Mr.* CONTEST.

SERVANT.

Your ſervant enquired for you, Sir, and left this. (*Exit.*

(*Mr.* CONTEST *breaks open the letter haſtily and reads.*)

Mr. CONTEST.

An invitation to go to his houſe immediately. [*He reads the remainder of the letter, and then expreſſing ſurpriſe*—Why my father tells me he was only married this very morning! I heard he was married a week ago!

Lord RAKELAND.

And ſo did I—and ſo did half the town. His marriage has even been in the newſpapers theſe three days.

Mr.

Mr. CONTEST.

Ay, theſe things are always announced before they take place: and I moſt ſincerely wiſh it had been delayed ſtill longer.

Lord RAKELAND.

I do not—for I long to have a kiſs of the bride.

Mr. CONTEST.

Pſhaw! my Lord: as it is the wedding day, I cannot think of taking you now; it may be improper.

Lord RAKELAND.

Not at all, not at all. A wedding day is a public day; and Sir Adam knows upon what familiar terms you and I are. Indeed, my dear friend, my going will be conſidered but as neighbourly. I can take no denial—I muſt go.

Mr. CONTEST.

Well, if it muſt be ſo, come then. [*Going, ſtops*—Notwithſtanding the cauſe I have for rejoicing at this kind invitation from my father, ſtill I feel embarraſſed at the thoughts of appearing before him, in the preſence of his young wife; for I have no doubt but ſhe'll take a diſlike to me.

Lord RAKELAND.

And if ſhe ſhould, I have no doubt but ſhe'll take a liking to *me*. So come away, and be in ſpirits. (*Exeunt.*

SCENE

SCENE II. *An Apartment at Sir* ADAM CONTEST'S.

Enter Sir ADAM, *dreſt in white clothes like a Bridegroom.*

Sir ADAM.

Nothing is ſo provoking as to be in a ſituation where one is expected to be merry—it is like being aſked in company " to tell a good ſtory, and to be entertaining;" and then you are ſure to be duller than ever you were in your life. Now, notwithſtanding this is my wedding day, I am in ſuch a bleſſed humour that I ſhould like to make every perſon's life in this houſe a burthen to them. But I won't [*Struggling with himſelf*—No, I won't.—What a combat is mine! To feel a perpetual tendency to every vice, and to poſſeſs no one laudable quality, but that of a determination to overcome all my temptations. I am ſtrongly impelled to violent anger, and yet I have the reſolution to be a calm, peaceable man—I am inclined to ſuſpicion, yet I conquer it, and *will* place confidence in others—I am diſpoſed to malice, yet I conſtantly get the better of it—I am addicted to love, yet I——No, hold!—there I muſt ſtop—that is a failing which always did get the better of *me*. Behold an inſtance of it.

Enter Lady CONTEST *ſlowly and penſively, dreſt like a Bride.*

Sir ADAM.

[*Aſide*—Now I will be in a good humour, in ſpite of all my doubts and fears.

Lady

Lady CONTEST.

Did you ſend for me, Sir Adam?

Sir ADAM.

Yes, my dear; your guardian is juſt ſtept home, to bring his wife to dine with us; and I wiſhed to have a few minutes converſation with you. Sit down. [*They ſit.* I obſerved, Lady Conteſt, (and it gave me ſome uneaſineſs), that at church this morning, while the ceremony was performing, you looked very pale. You have not yet wholly regained your colour: and inſtead of your uſual cheerful countenance and air, I perceive a penſive, dejected—Come, look cheerful. [*Very ſharply*—Why don't you look cheerful? [*Checking himſelf, and ſoftening his voice*—Conſider, every one ſhould be happy upon their wedding day, for it is a day that ſeldom comes above once in a perſon's life.

Lady CONTEST.

But with *you*, Sir Adam, it has come twice.

Sir ADAM.

Very true—it has—and my *firſt* was a day indeed! I ſhall never forget it! My wife was as young as you are now—

Lady CONTEST.

And you were younger than you are now.

Sir ADAM.

[*Starts—then aſide*—No, I won't be angry. [*To her*—She was beautiful too—nay more, ſhe was good; ſhe poſſeſſed every quality.—But this is not a proper topic on the preſent occaſion; and ſo, my dear, let us change the ſubject.

Lady

Lady CONTEST.

Pray, ſir Adam, is it true that your ſon is come to town?

Sir ADAM.

It is; and I expect him here every moment.

Lady CONTEST.

And have you invited no other company all day?

Sir ADAM.

Your guardian and his wife, Mr and Mrs. Ploughman, you know, will be here; and what other company would you have?

Lady CONTEST.

In the country we had always fiddles and dancing at every wedding; and I declare I have been merrier at other people's weddings, than I think I am likely to be at my own.

Sir ADAM.

If you loved me, Lady Conteſt, you would be merry in my company alone. *Do* you love me? My firſt wife loved me dearly.

Lady CONTEST.

And ſo do I love you dearly—juſt the ſame as I would love my father, if he were alive.

Sir ADAM.

[*Aſide.* Now could I lay her at my feet for that ſentence. But I won't—I won't. [*Struggling with himſelf*] Anſwer me this—would you change huſbands with any one of your acquaintance?

Lady

Lady CONTEST.

What ſignifies now my anſwering ſuch a queſtion as that, when I am ſure not one of my acquaintance would change with me?

Sir ADAM.

What makes you think ſo? *Violently*]—— [*Softoning*—Your equipage will be by far the moſt ſplendid of any lady's you will viſit. I have made good my promiſe in reſpect to your jewels too; and I hope you like them?

Lady CONTEST.

Like them! to be ſure!—Oh, my dear Sir Adam, they even make me like you.

Sir ADAM.

A very poor proof of your love, if you can give me no other.

Lady CONTEST.

But I'll give you fifty others.

Sir ADAM.

[*Anxiouſly*. Name them.

Lady CONTEST.

Firſt—I will always be obedient to you.

Sir ADAM.

That's well.

Lady CONTEST.

Second—I will never be angry with you if you ſhould go out and ſtay for a month—nay, for a year—or for as long as ever you like.

Sir ADAM.

[*Aſide, and ſtruggling with his paſſion*. Sure I

was not born to commit murder? I had better go out of the room.

Lady CONTEST.

[*Humming a tune.* "And old Robin Gray was kind to me."

Sir ADAM.

[*Riſing in agitation.* Oh my firſt wife, my firſt wife, what a treaſure was ſhe! But my treaſure is gone! *Sighing.*]

Lady CONTEST.

Not all your money, I hope, Sir Adam; for my guardian told me you had a great deal.

Sir ADAM.

And did you marry me for that? What makes you bluſh? Come, confeſs to me—for there was always a ſincerity in your nature which charmed me beyond your beauty. It was that ſincerity, and that alone, which captivated me.

Lady CONTEST.

Then I am ſurpriſed you did not marry your chaplain's widow, good old Mrs. Brown!

Sir ADAM.

Why ſo?

Laay CONTEST.

Becauſe I have heard you ſay "there was not ſo *ſincere* a woman on the face of the earth."

Sir ADAM.

[*Aſide.* And egad I almoſt wiſh I had married her. By what I have now ſaid, Lady Conteſt, I meant to let you know, that in compariſon

riſon with virtues, I have no eſteem for a youthful or a beautiful face.

Lady CONTEST.

Oh dear! how you and I differ! for I here declare, I do love a beautiful youthful face, better than I love any thing in the whole world.

Sir ADAM.

[*In a half-ſmothered rage.* Leave the room —leave the room inſtantly. [*After a violent ſtruggle.* No: Come back—come back, my dear—*Tenderly*—[*Aſide.* I'll be in a good humour preſently—but not juſt yet.——Yes—I *will* get the better of it.—I won't uſe her ill —I have ſworn at the altar, not to uſe her ill, and I will keep my vow. [*He ſits down affecting perfect compoſure, and after a pauſe*— Pray, Lady Conteſt, pray, have not you heard from your mother yet?

Lady CONTEST.

Not a line, nor a word.

Sir ADAM.

It is wonderful that ſhe ſhould not ſend us a very proper addreſs! There is no doubt but that every letter we have ſent to her ſince ſhe has been abroad, has miſcarried. However, it will be great joy and pride to her, when ſhe hears of your marriage.

Lady CONTEST.

Yes—for ſhe always ſaid I was not born to make my fortune.

Sir ADAM.

Which prediction I have annulled. And after all—Come hither—come hither—[*Takes*

her kindly by the hand—And after all, I do not repent that I have—for although I cannot ſay that you poſſeſs all thoſe qualifications which my firſt wife did, yet you behave very well conſidering your age.

Lady CONTEST.

And I am ſure ſo do you, conſidering yours.

Sir ADAM.

All my reſolution is gone, and I can keep my temper no longer. *Aſide.*] Go into your own chamber immediately. *He takes her by the hand and puts her off.*] I'll—I'll—I'll—[*Threatening as if going to follow her, then ſtops ſhort.* No, I'll go another way. [*As he is going off at the oppoſite ſide, enter a ſervant.*]

SERVANT.

My young maſter and another gentleman.

Enter Mr. CONTEST *and Lord* RAKELAND.

Mr. CONTEST.

[*To Sir Adam.* I kneel, Sir, for your pardon and your bleſſing.

Sir ADAM.

You have behaved very ill; but as you appear ſenſible of it, I forgive, and am glad to ſee you. But I expect that your future conduct ſhall give proof of your repentance. My Lord Rakeland, I beg pardon for introducing this ſubject before you; but you are not wholly unacquainted with it, I ſuppoſe?

Lord RAKELAND.

Mr. Conteſt has partly informed me. [*Aſide to Mr.* Conteſt—Aſk for your mother.

Mr.

Mr. CONTEST.

I ſincerely congratulate you on your nuptials, Sir, and I hope Lady Conteſt is well.

Sir ADAM.

[*Going to the ſide of the ſcene.* Deſire Lady Conteſt to walk this way.

Lord RAKELAND.

I ſincerely congratulate you, too, Sir Adam.

Sir ADAM.

Thank you, my Lord, thank you. [*Enter Lady* Conteſt. *Sir* Adam *takes her by the hand and preſents Mr.* Conteſt *to her*]. My dear, this is my ſon—and this, Tom, is your mother-in-law.

Lady CONTEST.

Dear Sir Adam, [*half laughing*] I was never ſo ſurpriſed in my life! Always when you ſpoke of your ſon you called him Tom, and Tommy, and I expected to ſee a little boy.

Sir ADAM.

And have you any objection to his being a man?

Lady CONTEST.

Oh no, I think I like him the better. [*To Mr.* Conteſt—Sir, I am glad to ſee you.

Mr. CONTEST.

I give your Ladyſhip joy. [*Salutes her hand.*

Lady CONTEST.

I ſhall be very fond of him, Sir Adam—I ſhall like him as well as if he was my own.

Sir ADAM.

[*Aſide.* Now am I in a rage, leſt ſeeing my ſon a man, ſhe ſhould be more powerfully reminded that I am old; and I long to turn him out of doors. But I won't—no—I'll be the kinder to him for this very ſuſpicion. Come, Tom, let me ſhake hands with you—we have not ſhaken hands a great while; and let this be a ſign of the full renewal of my paternal affection.

Lord RAKELAND.

Sir Adam, you have not introduced me to Lady Conteſt.

Lady CONTEST.

Is this another ſon?

Sir ADAM.

What, could you be fond of him too?

Lady CONTEST.

Yes, I could.

Sir ADAM.

And like him as well as if he were your own?

Lady CONTEST.

Yes, I could.

Sir ADAM.

But he is not my ſon.

Lady CONTEST.

I can't help thinking he is. [*Looking ſtedfaſtly at him.*

Sir

Sir ADAM.

I tell you he is not.

Lady CONTEST.

Nay, nay, you are joking—I am ſure he is.

Sir ADAM.

[*Raiſing his voice.* I tell you, no.

Lady CONTEST.

Why he is very like you. [*She goes up to Lord* Rakeland, *and looks in his face.* No, he is not ſo like when you are cloſe. I beg ten thouſand pardons, Sir, you are not at all like Sir Adam.

Sir ADAM.

[*Aſide.* Zounds, now I am jealous—and I am afraid my propenſity will get the better of me. But no, it ſhan't—No, it *ſhall not.* ——My Lord, I beg your pardon, but I want half an hour's private converſation with my ſon; will you excuſe us?

Lord RAKELAND.

Certainly, Sir Adam—I beg you will make no ſtranger of me.

Sir ADAM.

[*Taking Mr.* Conteſt *by the hand.* Come, Tom. [*Aſide*—There, now, I have left them alone; and I think this is triumphing over my jealouſy pretty well. Well done, Sir Adam, well done. [*Exit with Mr.* Conteſt, *Sir* Adam *ſmiling with ſelf-applauſe at the victory he has gained.*

Lord RAKELAND.

My dear Lady Conteſt, though I acknowledge I have not the happineſs to be your ſon, yet, permit me to beg a bleſſing on my knees —'Tis this—Tell me when and where I ſhall have the happineſs of ſeeing you again?

Lady

Lady CONTEST.

Dear Sir, without any compliment, the happineſs will be done to me.

Lord RAKELAND.

Enchanting woman! appoint the time.

Lady CONTEST.

I'll aſk Sir Adam.

Lord RAKELAND.

No—without his being preſent.

Lady CONTEST.

I don't know if I ſha'n't like that full as well.

Lord RAKELAND.

Appoint a time, then; juſt to play a game at cribbage.

Lady CONTEST.

Or what do you think of "Beggar my Neighbour?"—would not that do as well?

Lord RAKELAND.

Perfectly as well. The very thing.

Lady CONTEST.

But you muſt take care how you play; for it is a game you may loſe a great deal of money by.

Lord RAKELAND.

But Sir Adam muſt not know of it.

Enter Sir ADAM, *and ſpeaks aſide.*

Sir ADAM.

Reſolutions come and go——I wiſh I could have

have kept mine, and ſtaid away a little longer. [*Affecting good humour.* What, my Lord, here ſtill? holding converſation with this giddy woman?

Lord RAKELAND.

[*Affecting coldneſs.* I aſſure you, Sir Adam, I am very well pleaſed with Lady Conteſt's converſation.

Lady CONTEST.

And I am ſure, my Lord, I am very *much* pleaſed with yours.

Lord RAKELAND.

We have been talking about a game at cards.

Lady CONTEST.

But you ſaid Sir Adam was not to be of the party.

Lord RAKELAND.

Yes, Sir Adam—but not Mr. Conteſt.

Lady CONTEST.

No, indeed you ſaid Sir Adam.

Lord RAKELAND.

Oh no.

Lady CONTEST.

[*Eagerly.* Yes—becauſe, don't you remember I ſaid—and you made anſwer—

Lord RAKELAND.

I don't remember any thing—

Lady CONTEST.

What! don't you remember kneeling for my bleſſing?

Sir

Sir ADAM.

How! What!

Lord RAKELAND.

Sir Adam, it would be a breach of good manners were I to contradict Lady Conteſt a ſecond time; therefore I acknowledge that ſhe is right—and that I have been in the wrong.

[*Exit bowing with great reſpect.*

Lady CONTEST.

[*To Sir* Adam *apart, and pulling his ſleeve.* Won't you aſk him to dinner?

Sir ADAM.

Aſk him to dinner! What a difference between you and my firſt wife!—Would *ſhe* have wiſhed me to aſk him to dinner? would *ſhe* have ſuffered a man to kneel—

Lady CONTEST.

I did not ſuffer him to kneel a moment.

Sir ADAM.

—But my firſt wife was a model of perfection, and it is unjuſt to reproach you with the compariſon. Yet I cannot help ſaying—would ſhe had lived!

Lady CONTEST.

And I am ſure I wiſh ſo, with all my heart.

Sir ADAM.

[*Fetching a heavy ſigh.* But ſhe was ſuddenly ſnatched from me.

Lady CONTEST.

How was it, Sir Adam? Were you not at ſea together?

together? And ſo a ſtorm aroſe—and ſo you took to the long-boat—and ſhe would ſtay in the ſhip—and ſo ſhe called to you, and you would not go—and you called to her, and ſhe would not come. And ſo your boat ſailed, and her ſhip ſunk.

Sir ADAM.

Don't, don't—I can't bear to hear it repeated. I loved her too ſincerely. But the only proof I can now give of my affection, is to be kind to her ſon; and as by what he acknowledged to me, his heart I perceived was bent upon marriage, I have given him leave to introduce to me the lady on whom he has fixed his choice—and if I like her—

Lady CONTEST.

Has he fixed his choice? Who is the young lady? What is her name?

Sir ADAM.

I did not aſk her name.

Lady CONTEST.

But I hope you will give your conſent, whoever ſhe is.

Sir ADAM.

And if I do, in a little time they may both wiſh I had not. Young people are ſo capricious they don't know their own minds half an hour. For inſtance, I dare ſay you think very highly of that young Lord who was here juſt now; but if you were to ſee him two or three times a week, you would ceaſe to admire him.

Lady CONTEST.

I ſhould like to try. Do invite him here two or three times a week, on purpoſe to try.

Enter

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

Mr. and Mrs. Ploughman are come, Sir, and dinner is almoſt ready. [*Exit.*

Lady CONTEST.

[*Looking at her hand, gives a violent ſcream.* Oh! Oh!—Oh dear! Sir Adam—Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh dear!

Sir ADAM.

What's the matter? What in the name of heaven is the matter?

Lady CONTEST.

I wiſh I may die if I have not loſt my wedding ring.—Oh! 'tis a ſure ſign of ſome ill luck.

Sir ADAM.

Here, John! [*Enter* SERVANT.] Go and look for your miſtreſs's wedding ring; ſhe has dropt it ſomewhere about the houſe.

Lady CONTEST.

I am afraid it was in the ſtreet, as I ſtepp'd out of my coach. Oh! indeed, Sir Adam, it did not ſtick cloſe. I remember I pulled my glove off juſt at that time; go and look there, John. [*Exit* Servant.] Oh! Sir Adam, ſome ill luck will certainly happen to one or both of us: you may depend upon it.

Sir ADAM.

Childiſh nonſenſe! What ill luck can happen to us while we are good?

Lady CONTEST.

But ſuppoſe we ſhould not be good?

Sir

Sir ADAM.

We always may if we pleaſe.

Lady CONTEST.

I know we may. But then ſometimes 'tis a great deal of trouble.

Sir ADAM.

Come, don't frighten yourſelf about omens; you'll find your ring again.

Lady CONTEST.

Do you think that young Lord mayn't have found it? Suppoſe we ſend to aſk him?

Sir ADAM.

Did you miſs it while he was here?

Lady CONTEST.

No nor ſhould not have miſſed any thing, if he had ſtaid till midnight.

Sir ADAM.

[*Taking her by the hand.* Come, come to dinner. [*Going, ſtops.* But I muſt ſay this has been a very careleſs thing of you. My firſt wife would not have loſt *her* wedding ring.

Lady CONTEST.

But indeed, Sir Adam, mine did not fit.

(*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *An Apartment at Mr.* MILLDEN'S.

Enter Lady AUTUMN *and Mrs.* HAMFORD.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

My dear Lady Autumn, Mr. Conteſt is not of a proper age for a lover, much leſs for a huſband of yours.

Lady AUTUMN.

Mrs. Hamford, I believe, old as you pretend to think me now, you thought me young but a few weeks ago at Venice; when, on your firſt landing there, you impoſed upon me your romantic tale, and prevailed with me to bring you to England.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

Hold, Madam, do not conclude too haſtily, that, becauſe I have for a few days ſince my arrival in my native country, deferred my promiſe of revealing to you my real name and my connections here, that I am for this reaſon an impoſtor.

Lady AUTUMN.

No; upon recollection, you certainly *have* been living on a ſavage iſland for theſe ten or twelve years, which gives you all theſe Hottentot ideas in reſpect to the advanced age of women. In ſome ſavage countries women are old at ſeventeen; but in this enlightened nation we are all young at ſeventy.

Enter

Enter Mr. MILLDEN.

Mr. MILLDEN.

Lady Autumn, I make no apology for entering your apartment thus abruptly, becauſe I come with good news—Your daughter is married.

Lady AUTUMN.

Married! What! while I have been abroad?

Mr. MILLDEN.

No doubt—But I cannot give you any particulars of the marriage, nor tell you even the gentleman's name—for I only paſſed her guardian by accident in his carriage, and I had not an opportunity to enquire, nor he to inform me farther, than "that it was a moſt advantageous union for your daughter, for that her huſband is a man of fortune and title."

Mrs. HAMFORD.

There, Lady Autumn! you find you have a daughter old enough to be a wife.

Lady AUTUMN.

More ſhame for her—Why was not my conſent aſked?

Mr. MILLDEN.

You were out of England, and no letters reached you. However, your daughter's guardian will call upon you in the evening, and explain to you every particular.

Lady AUTUMN.

But now, my dear Mr. Millden, and you my dear Mrs. Hamford, don't let this marriage eſcape your lips, if Mr. Conteſt ſhould call this

evening—for if my daughter's huſband ſhould not, after all, be a man of ſome importance, I ſhould wiſh to keep it a ſecret from Mr. Conteſt that I have a daughter married. (*Exit.*

Mr. MILLDEN.

Mrs. Hamford, I obſerve a gloom upon your countenance; I hope no enquiries you have made concerning any part of your family ſince you arrived in England—[*He takes her hand*—You tremble! What's the matter?

Mrs. HAMFORD.

I tremble till a viſit which I am now going to make is over; and then, whatever is my deſtiny, I truſt in that Power which has ſupported me through numerous trials, to give me reſignation. (*Exeunt.*

SCENE. *An Apartment at Sir* ADAM CONTEST'S.

Enter Lady CONTEST, *followed by her Maid.*

Lady CONTEST.

[*Pulling off her cloak.* Has any body called on me, Hannah, ſince I have been out?

HANNAH.

Yes, Madam, an elderly gentlewoman; but ſhe refuſed to leave her name—ſhe ſaid ſhe had particular buſineſs, and wanted to ſpeak to you in private.

Lady CONTEST.

Then pray let me ſee her when ſhe comes again.

HANNAH.

HANNAH.

I told her, Madam, that you were only gone to the milliner's in the next ſtreet.

Lady CONTEST.

Has any body elſe called, Hannah?

HANNAH.

No, Ma'am

Enter a SERVANT.

SERVANT.

Lord Rakeland, if your ladyſhip is not engaged—

Lady CONTEST.

[*Drawing* Hannah *on one ſide.* Oh! Hannah, Hannah! is this the elderly gentlewoman? —Oh! for ſhame, Hannah!—However, poor Hannah, don't be uneaſy, I won't be very angry with you. [*To the* Servant. You may deſire his Lordſhip to walk up. (*Exit* Servant.

HANNAH.

Upon my word, my Lady—

Lady CONTEST.

Oh, hold your tongue, Hannah—you know this is the elderly gentlewoman you meant—but no matter; I am almoſt every bit as well pleaſed.

Enter Lord RAKELAND. (*Exit* HANNAH.

Lord RAKELAND.

My adorable Lady Conteſt—

Lady CONTEST.

I hope you are very well—but I need not aſk, for you look charmingly.

Lord RAKELAND.

And you look like a divinity! I met Sir Adam this moment in his carriage going out, and that emboldened me—

Lady CONTEST.

Yes, Sir, he is gone out a little while with my guardian; but he'll ſoon be back. I ſuppoſe, Sir, you called to play an hand of cards.

Lord RAKELAND.

No—my errand was to tell you—I love you; I adore you; and to plead for your love in return.

Lady CONTEST.

But that is not in my power to give.

Lord RAKELAND.

You cannot poſſibly have given it to Sir Adam!

Lady CONTEST.

I ſhan't tell you what I have done with it.

Lord RAKELAND.

You could love me; I know you could.

Lady CONTEST.

If you were my huſband I would try: and then, perhaps, take all the pains I would, I could not.

Lord RAKELAND.

Oh! that I *were* your huſband! (*kneeling.*

Lady CONTEST.

You would not kneel ſo if you were. Not even on the wedding day.

Lord

Lord RAKELAND.

No, but I would claſp you thus.

(*Throwing his arms round her.*

Lady CONTEST.

Oh dear! Oh dear! I am afraid Sir Adam's firſt wife would not have ſuffered this!

Lord RAKELAND.

Why talk of Sir Adam? Oh! that you were mine inſtead of his!

Lady CONTEST.

And would you really marry me, if I were ſingle?

Lord RAKELAND.

Would I?—yes—this inſtant, were you unmarried, this inſtant, with rapture, I would become your happy bridegroom.

Lady CONTEST.

I wonder what Sir Adam would ſay were he to hear you talk thus; he ſuſpected you were in love with me at the very firſt—I can't ſay I did—I ſuſpected nothing—but I have found a great deal.

Lord RAKELAND.

Nothing to my diſadvantage, I hope?

Lady CONTEST.

No—nor any thing that ſhall be of diſadvantage to Sir Adam.

Lord RAKELAND.

Why are you perpetually talking of your huſband?

Lady

Lady CONTEST.

Becauſe, when I am in your company, I am always thinking of him.

Lord RAKELAND.

Do I make you think of your huſband?

Lady CONTEST.

Yes—and you make me tremble for him.

Lord RAKELAND.

Never be unhappy about Sir Adam.

Lady CONTEST.

I won't—and he ſhall never have cauſe to be unhappy about me—for I'll go lock myſelf up till he comes home. (*Going.*

Lord RAKELAND.

[*Holding her.* What are you alarmed at? Is there any thing to terrify you either in my countenance or addreſs?—In your preſence, I feel myſelf an object of pity, not of terror.

Lady CONTEST.

Ay, but this may be all make-believe, like the poor little boy in the ſong.

SONG.

I.

In the dead of the night, when with labour oppreſt,
All mortals enjoy the calm bleſſings of eaſe,
Cupid knock'd at my window, diſturbing my reſt,
Who's there? I demanded—begone, if you pleaſe.

II.

He anſwered ſo meekly, ſo modeſt, and mild,
Dear ma'am, it is I, an unfortunate child;

'Tis

'Tis a cold rainy night, I am wet to the ſkin;
I have loſt my way, ma'am, ſo pray let me in.

III.

No ſooner from wet and from cold he got eaſe,
Than taking his bow, he cry'd, ma'am, if you pleaſe,
If you pleaſe, ma'am, I would by experiment know
If the rain has damaged the ſtring of my bow.

IV.

Then away ſkipp'd the urchin, as briſk as a bee,
And, laughing, I wiſh you much joy, ma'am, ſaid he;
My bow is undamag'd, for true went the dart,
But you will have trouble enough with your heart.

(*Going.*

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

A lady, a ſtranger, who Mrs. Hannah ſays your ladyſhip gave orders ſhould be admitted—

Lady CONTEST.

Very true—Deſire her to walk in—ſhew her up. (*Exit* Servant.

Lord RAKELAND.

Who is it?

Lady CONTEST.

I don't know—I can't tell—I thought you had been her: but I was miſtaken.

Lord RAKELAND.

Will ſhe ſtay long?

Lady CONTEST.

I don't know any thing about her.

Lord RAKELAND.

Dear Lady Conteſt, do not let me meet her on the ſtairs; conceal me ſomewhere till ſhe is gone.

gone. Here, I'll go into this dreſſing room.

[*He goes to a door, which leads to the next chamber.*

Lady CONTEST.

Then you will hear our diſcourſe.

Lord RAKELAND.

No matter; I will keep it a ſecret.

Lady CONTEST.

No, no; you muſt go away—out of the houſe.

Lord RAKELAND.

I can't—I won't—don't expoſe yourſelf before the lady.

Enter Mrs. HAMFORD.

[*Lord* Rakeland *goes into the next room; but ſtands at the door, and liſtens to the converſation of the enſuing ſcene.*]

Mrs. HAMFORD.

[*Courtſeying to Lady* Conteſt—I beg pardon, Madam.

Lady CONTEST.

[*Courtſeying*—No apologies, Madam.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

I am afraid I am not right! (*looking round.*

Lady CONTEST.

Yes, Madam—Pray are not you the lady who called this afternoon, and ſaid you had particular buſineſs?

Mrs.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

I am. [*Looking earneſtly at her*—And are you Lady Conteſt?

Lady CONTEST.

Yes, Ma'am.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

Sir Adam's wife? (*In ſurpriſe.*

Lady CONTEST.

Yes, ma'am, Sir Adam's wife—won't you pleaſe to ſit down? (*They ſit.*

Mrs. HAMFORD.

There is then, Lady Conteſt, a very material circumſtance in my life, that I wiſh to reveal to you; and to receive from *you* advice how to act, rather than by confiding in the judgment of any of my own family, be flattered, by their partiality, into a blameable ſyſtem of conduct. Such is the nature of my preſent errand to you: but, to my great ſurpriſe, I find you ſo very, very young——

Lady CONTEST.

Yes, Ma'am, thank Heaven.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

You are very happy, I preſume?

Lady CONTEST.

[*Heſitating*—Y-e-s, Ma'am—yes, very happy, all things conſidered.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

I am ſorry then to be the meſſenger of news that

that will, moſt probably, deſtroy that happineſs for ever.

Lady CONTEST.

Dear me! what news? You frighten me out of my wits! (*Riſing.*

Mrs. HAMFORD.

You are now Lady Conteſt, newly married; in the height of youth, health, proſperity; and I am the fatal object who, in one moment, may cruſh all thoſe joys!

Lady CONTEST.

Oh! then pray don't—you'll break my heart if you do. What have I done, or what has happened to take away from me all my joys?—Where's my pocket handkerchief? (*Feeling in her pocket.*

Mrs. HAMFORD.

Here, take mine, and compoſe yourſelf.

Lady CONTEST.

[*Taking it*—Thank you, Ma'am.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

And now, my dear, I will inform you—and at the ſame time flatter myſelf that you will deal frankly with me, and not reſtrain any of thoſe ſenſations which my tale may cauſe.

Lady CONTEST.

Dear Madam, I never conceal any of my ſenſations—I can't if I would.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

Then what will they be when I tell you—I am

am Sir Adam Conteſt's wife—his wife whom he thinks drowned; but who was preſerved and reſtored to life, though not till now reſtored to my own country.

Lady CONTEST.

Dear Madam, I don't know any body on earth I ſhould be happier to ſee! [*Runs to her, embraces, and hugs her repeatedly.*

Mrs. HAMFORD.

But conſider, my dear, *you* are no longer wife to Sir Adam!

Lady CONTEST.

And is that all?—here, take your handkerchief again. *Returns it to her*] And come you out of your hiding place. [*She goes to the chamber where Lord* Rakeland *is—He enters confuſed, and bowing to Mrs.* Hamford—Come, come, for you need no longer conceal yourſelf now, or be miſerable; for I have no longer a huſband to prevent my being your wife—or to prevent me from loving you—for oh! oh! I do—[*Checks herſelf*—though I durſt not ſay ſo before.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

May I enquire who this gentleman is?

Lady CONTEST.

A poor man that has been dying for love of me, even though he thought it a ſin.

Lord RAKELAND.

I beg pardon, and promiſe never to be guilty for the future—I wiſh you a good evening.

[*Going.*

Lady CONTEST.

You are not going away?

Lord RAKELAND.

I have an engagement it is impoſſible to poſtpone.—Good evening.

Lady CONTEST.

But you will ſoon come back, I hope?—for I ſuppoſe you hold your mind to be my huſband?

Lord RAKELAND.

Alas! that is a happineſs above my hopes.

Lady CONTEST.

Above your hopes!

Lord RAKELAND.

It is.

Lady CONTEST.

Then it ſhall be *beneath* mine.

[*He bows, and exit.*

Mrs. HAMFORD.

And is it poſſible that you can think of parting with Sir Adam without the leaſt reluctance?

Lady CONTEST.

Pray, Madam, when did you ſee Sir Adam laſt?

Mrs. HAMFORD.

About fifteen years ago.

Lady CONTEST.

He is greatly altered ſince that time.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

Still will my affection be the ſame.

Lady CONTEST.

And ſo it ought; for he loves *you* ſtill—he is for ever talking of you; and declares he never

never knew what happineſs was ſince he loſt you. Oh! he will be ſo pleaſed to change *me* for *you!*

Mrs. HAMFORD.

I hope you do not flatter me!

Lady CONTEST.

I am ſure I don't—I expect him at home every minute, and then you'll ſee!

Mrs. HAMFORD.

Excuſe me—At preſent I could not ſupport an interview. I will take my leave till I hear from you; and will confide in your artleſs and ingenuous friendſhip to inform Sir Adam of my eſcape.

Lady CONTEST.

You may depend upon me, Lady Conteſt.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

Adieu! [*Going.*

Lady CONTEST.

Dear Madam, I would inſiſt on waiting upon you down ſtairs; but I won't ſtand upon any ceremony with you in your own houſe.

[*Exit Mrs.* HAMFORD.

[*As Lady* Conteſt *is going off at the oppoſite ſide, ſhe ſtops on hearing Sir* Adam's *voice without.*

Sir ADAM.

Nobody ſo plagued as I am with ſervants!

Enter Sir ADAM.

Lady CONTEST.

Bleſs me, Sir Adam, I did not know you were come home!

Sir ADAM.

I have been at home this quarter of an hour. The coachman has made himſelf tipſy on the joyful occaſion of our marriage, and was very near daſhing out my brains in turning a corner.

Lady CONTEST.

And is that worth being in ſuch an ill temper about?—Ah! you would not be ſo croſs, if you knew ſomething.

Sir ADAM.

Knew what?—I have a piece of news to tell you.

Lady CONTEST.

And I have a piece of news to tell *you*.

Sir ADAM.

Your mother is arrived in town: your guardian heard ſo this morning, but he did not mention it to me till this moment, becauſe he thinks it is proper for him to wait upon, and acquaint her with our marriage in form, before I throw myſelf at her feet to aſk her bleſſing.

Lady CONTEST.

Very well—with all my heart. And now, Sir Adam—what do you think?

Sir ADAM.

What do I think!

Lady CONTEST.

What will you give me to tell you ſomething that will make you go almoſt out of your wits with joy?

Sir ADAM.

What do you mean?—Have I got another eſtate left me?

Lady

Lady CONTEST.

No: ſomething better.

Sir ADAM.

Better than that!

Lady CONTEST.

A great deal better—*you* will think.

Sir ADAM.

[*Eagerly*—Has the county meeting agreed to elect me their repreſentative?

Lady CONTEST.

No.

Sir ADAM.

What any thing better than that?

Lady CONTEST.

A great deal better than that—and ſomething the moſt ſurpriſing!—Gueſs again.

Sir ADAM.

Pſhaw! I'll gueſs no more—I hate ſuch teazing—it is unmannerly—would my firſt wife have ſerved me ſo?

Lady CONTEST.

Now you have hit upon it.

Sir ADAM.

Upon what?

Lady CONTEST.

Your firſt wife.

Sir ADAM.

Ay, I ſhall never ſee her like again!

Lady CONTEST.

No, but you may ſee her—for ſhe is alive, and you may have her home as ſoon as you pleaſe.

Sir ADAM.

What the deuce does the woman mean?
[*Trembling.*

Lady CONTEST.

Your firſt wife—eſcaped in the long boat—as ſurpriſing a ſtory as Robinſon Cruſoe!—I have ſeen her, and ſhe longs to ſee you.

Sir ADAM.

Why, what do you mean?—*Still trembling*] Alive?

Lady CONTEST.

As much alive as I am.

Sir ADAM.

And what does ſhe intend to do?—*Trembling*] Poor woman! poor creature! where does ſhe intend to go?

Lady CONTEST.

Go! Come home, to be ſure.

Sir ADAM.

Home!—what does ſhe call her home?

Lady CONTEST.

You are her home.

Sir ADAM.

I her home!—Come to me!—What can I do with her?—and what is to become of you?

Lady CONTEST.

Oh! never mind me.

Sir ADAM.

Yes, but I can't think to part with you—*Ready to cry.*] I can't think to turn a poor young creature like you upon the wide world.
—Her

—Her age will ſecure her; *ſhe* won't be in half the danger.

Lady CONTEST.

Poor ſoul! if you knew what ſhe has ſuffered—

Sir ADAM.

And have not I ſuffered too? I am ſure I have lamented her loſs every hour of my life; you have heard me.

Lady CONTEST.

And yet you don't ſeem half ſo much pleaſed at her return as I am.

Sir ADAM.

I cannot help being concerned to think, what a melancholy twelve or fourteen years the poor woman has experienced! moſt likely upon ſome deſert iſland, inſtead of being in heaven!

Lady CONTEST.

But if you are concerned upon *her* account, you ought to be pleaſed upon your own, my dear—[*Checks herſelf*] I beg pardon; I mean Sir Adam.

Sir ADAM.

No, no, call me "my dear"—do not ſhew reſerve to me already; for if you do, you will break my heart.

Lady CONTEST.

I would not break your heart for the world—and indeed, Sir Adam—you will always be dear to me—quite as dear when we are parted, dearer than if we were living together.

Sir ADAM.

Don't talk of parting—Can you reſolve to part from me?

Lady

Lady CONTEST.

Yes, becauſe I know you will be ſo much happier with your firſt wife.

Sir ADAM.

But if our parting ſhould give you any uneaſineſs—

Lady CONTEST.

It won't a bit.

Sir ADAM.

No!

Lady CONTEST.

No, [*ſoothing*—not when I know you are with that good, prudent woman, your firſt wife.

Sir ADAM.

[*Aſide.*—Now here is a time to exert my power over myſelf: what ſignifies having exerted it in trivial matters, if from a trial ſuch as this I ſhrink?—[*To her—making many efforts to get rid of his feelings*—Well, Madam, I am prepared to ſee my firſt wife—and to part with my ſecond.

Lady CONTEST.

Then ſit down and write to her, that you long to ſee her.

Sir ADAM.

No! I can ſacrifice all my ſenſations, but I cannot ſacrifice truth.

Lady CONTEST.

Will you give me leave to write to her, a kind letter for you, and invite her to come hither directly?

Sir

Sir ADAM.

[*After a ſtruggle*—You may do as you like.

Lady CONTEST.

Ay, I ſhan't be with you long, and ſo you may as well let me have my own way while I ſtay.—[*She writes—he walks about, ſtarts, and ſhews various ſigns of uneaſineſs during the time.*

Lady CONTEST.

Here they are; only a few words, but very kind; telling her to "fly to your impatient wiſhes." Here, John—[*Enter Servant*]—this letter to Mr. Millden's immediately.—[*Exit Servant*]—[*She goes to Sir Adam*——Come, look pleaſed; conſider how charming it is for old friends to meet.

Sir ADAM.

Yes, if they are not too old. However, fear nothing in regard to my conduct, for I *will*, I *will* act properly—ſo properly, that I will not truſt my own judgment; and the firſt perſon I conſult ſhall be your mother, and I'll go to her this inſtant. [*Going*—Sure never ſuch a ſtrange, intricate affair ever happened before!—but ſtrange as it is, I will act as I ought to do—My inclination may rebel, but my reaſon ſhall conquer—I will act as I ought to do.

Enter a SERVANT.

SERVANT.

Lady Autumn and Mr. Conteſt.

Sir ADAM.

And here your mother comes moſt opportunely.

Enter

Enter Mr. CONTEST *and Lady* AUTUMN.

Mr. CONTEST.

Sir Adam, according to your permiſſion, I have brought the lady on whom I have placed my affections, to receive from—

Lady CONTEST.

Oh my dear mother, how do you do?—[*Running to Lady* Autumn.

Mr. CONTEST.

Mother!—Your mother!

Lady CONTEST.

Yes—though ſhe looks very well, does not ſhe?

Mr. CONTEST.

This is the lady on whom I have fixed my choice.

Lady CONTEST.

What, on my mamma! Nay, Mr. Conteſt, now I am ſure you are joking—ha, ha, ha, ha,—ha, ha, ha, ha,—fixed your choice on my mother!

Sir ADAM.

And my mother! your father's mother!—Why you are as bad as the man in the farce—fall in love with your grandmother.

Lady CONTEST.

Dear mamma, don't make yourſelf uneaſy, if you have a mind to marry my ſon; for there is a lady now at Mr. Millden's, and who is coming here, that will claim him for *her* ſon, and make me no longer wife to Sir Adam.

Lady AUTUMN.

This can be no other than Mrs. Hamford, whom I brought to England.

Enter

Enter Mr. MILLDEN.

Mr. MILLDEN.

Mr. Conteſt, will you ſtep for a moment to the perſon in the next room. [*Exit Mr.* Conteſt.] Sir Adam Conteſt, I come to inform you, that there is a lady in the next room who has been near fainting at the ſound of your voice.

Sir ADAM.

And I believe I *ſhall* faint at the ſound of her's.

Mr. MILLDEN.

Her ſon is ſupporting her to you.

Enter Mrs. HAMFORD *leaning on Mr.* CONTEST.

Lady CONTEST.

Dear Sir Adam, fly and embrace your firſt wife. [*She goes to her*—Dear Lady Conteſt, notwithſtanding his ſeeming inſenſibility he loves you to diſtraction: a thouſand times has he declared to me, he did not think there was ſuch a woman in the world.

Sir ADAM.

And I did flatter myſelf, there was not.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

[*Seeing Sir Adam advance towards her*—Oh! Sir Adam!

Sir ADAM.

Oh my dear! If you knew what I have ſuffered, and what I ſtill ſuffer on your account, you would pity me.

Lady AUTUMN.

Sir Adam, I give you joy of a wife that ſuits your own age.

Sir ADAM.

And ſuch a one ſhall my ſon marry, when he has my conſent.

Mrs.

Mrs. HAMFORD.

Come, come, Sir Adam and Lady Autumn, theſe mutual reproaches, for almoſt the ſelf-ſame fault, ought to convince you, that in your plans of wedlock you have both been wrong.

Sir ADAM.

However, it ſhall be *my* endeavour to be henceforward right: for after ſettling upon my young bride a handſome dower, I will peaceably yield her up;—and though it is a hard ſtruggle, yet, like all other ſtruggles, it will, I have no doubt, give me happineſs in the end.

Lady CONTEST.

[*Crying till ſhe ſobs.* Good b'ye, Sir Adam—good b'ye—I did love you a little upon my word; and if I was not ſure you were going to be ſo much happier with your firſt wife, I ſhould never know a moment's peace.

Sir ADAM.

I thank you. And at parting, all I have to requeſt of you is—that you will not marry again till I die.

Lady CONTEST.

Indeed, Sir Adam, I will not—but then you won't make it long.

Sir ADAM.

I believe I ſhan't.

Lady CONTEST.

And my next huſband ſhall be of my own age; but he ſhall poſſeſs, Sir Adam, your principles of honour. And then, if my wedding ring ſhould unhappily ſit looſe, I will guard it with unwearied diſcretion: and I will hold it *ſacred*—even though it ſhould *pinch* my finger.

FINIS.

BRITISH MUSEUM 15 JUL 1962